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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINGSTON 000100

SIPDIS

WHA/CAR (BENT), INL/LP (KBROWN), DS/IP/WHA, DS/IP/ITA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [JM](#)

SUBJECT: 2004 A BANNER YEAR FOR CRIME IN JAMAICA

REF: A. 03 KINGSTON 0991

[B](#). 04 KINGSTON 01956

[C](#). 04 KINGSTON 01608

Classified By: Ambassador Sue M. Cobb for reasons 1.5 (b) & (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: For many Jamaicans, crime remained a major preoccupation throughout 2004. According to the Jamaica Constabulary Force's (JCF) Crime Statistics Report (CSR) for 2004, close to nine thousand major crimes were committed island-wide during the year. By December 31, the number of homicides had skyrocketed to 1,469 (the most in Jamaica's history), with October the worst month, accounting for over 157 murders. Because not all crimes are reported or come to the attention of the police, and because the criminal code contains many more varieties of major crimes than those listed in the CSR, the sum total of crime actually committed during 2004 may have been greater than is indicated by the CSR. Incoming JCF Commissioner Lucius Thomas will have his hands full if he is to address the JCF's many shortcomings, and, with frequent, credible allegations of corruption in the police force and the political arena, there is little indication at present that the country's crime problem will be resolved soon. His is likely to be a short honeymoon. End Summary.

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Crime Rate Spirals Upward  
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[1](#)2. (C) The latest Crime Statistics Report (CSR) compiled by the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) for the period covering January 1 through December 31, described a 29 percent increase in major crimes as compared with the same period in [1](#)2003. A total of 8,800 major crimes were committed, an increase of 2,003. (Note: the CSR lists major crimes as murder, shooting, rape, carnal abuse, robbery, breaking and larceny, but does not take into account other major crimes such as extortion and felonious wounding. End Note.) The number of murders rose 51 percent, breaking and entering as well as shootings each followed with a jump of 46 percent, and robberies increased 23 percent. The number of rapes dropped by 8 percent while carnal abuse and larceny offenses rose slightly. According to the 2004 CSR, 28 percent of the murders committed were reprisals, 21 percent were domestic disputes (Note: Domestic disputes are defined as disturbances between two individuals that know each other, but who may not necessarily be family members. For example, an altercation between a store proprietor and customer would also fall within this category. End Note.) Sixteen percent went undetermined, 18 percent were gang related, while the remaining 17 percent consisted of drug, rape and mob-related motives.

[1](#)3. (C) In stark human terms, during the 12 months of 2004, 1,469 people died through intentional criminal violence. This is the highest number of murders in Jamaica's recorded history. As in previous years, the great bulk of the crimes committed were firearms related (murder and shootings). At 76 percent, the gun was by far the weapon of choice used in committing murders, followed by knives (13 percent), and machetes (5 percent). The total number of reported crimes rose 31 percent in rural areas as compared with a 61 percent increase in the total for urban communities.

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The Difficulty with Measuring Crime  
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[1](#)4. (C) Statistics about crime are gathered by the JCF as one of its responsibilities. To get this data, the JCF relies on the cooperation of police from each of its nineteen divisions. The JCF requests information in more or less standardized forms, but the police are not required by law to comply. The crime data at best only estimates the incidence of a selected number of crime categories. The best conclusion that can be drawn from even the most carefully gathered statistics is that the actual incidence of crime is probably no less than indicated but may be much more extensive. Many crimes are underreported, such as rape and extortion, in which the victim is likely to receive as much unwanted publicity as the criminal, or suffer retribution, while other crimes remain undetected and unsolved.

15. (C) Some observers have questioned whether the JCF figures reflect reality. The police have been accused of reporting serious crimes as lesser offenses in order to create the appearance of less crime in their divisions. Furthermore, available crime statistics deal with only a select few categories, and even assuming reliable data within these categories, the total crime picture of Jamaican society is incomplete. The CSR is based upon "crimes known to the police". Also missing from this picture are the complex yet apparently frequent illicit activities of Jamaica's widespread organized criminal elements, as represented by the "community leader", "shotta" (slang for gunman), "gangster" or "don" (Ref A). Added to this equation is the fact that statistics are compiled manually. The JCF does not have an automated system, thus the compilation of statistics is subject to human error. Aware, however, that no problem - whether medical, scientific, or social - can be attacked successfully until its dimensions are known, the JCF leadership is trying to implement more accurate central reporting methods.

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Corruption Hinders Progress  
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16. (C) In 2004, there were a number of graphic illustrations of the weakness of law enforcement and political institutions in combating crime. One particularly stark example: at the time of his murder in July 2004, alleged Spanish Town "One Order" gang leader Oliver "Bubba" Smith was using a vehicle registered in the name of his alleged criminal deputy, Andrew "Bun Man" Hope, and Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) MP Olivia "Babsy" Grange. (Ref B) Police questioned Grange for several hours regarding her connection to Smith and Hope. She denied knowing Smith and claimed that she only guaranteed a loan for Hope, who is one of her "constituency workers." During a four hour search of Smith's home, the police found a green Jamaica Labour Party t-shirt with the words "One Love Babsy Cares" written on the front and "One Order Central St. Catherine" written on the back. The investigation into Grange's relationship with Smith has been dropped.

17. (C) Deputy Commissioner of Police Lucius Thomas, who is to become the new Commissioner of the JCF on January 19 (Ref C), recently told Poloff that every illegal operation in Jamaica - gangs, drug runners, extortionists, etc. have at least two to three JCF officers involved. He stated frankly that it is impossible for illegal activity to take place in Jamaica without some sort of JCF assistance. In an effort to address corruption in its ranks, the JCF is to implement new reform policies under the Professional Standards Branch of the JCF. This new unit's core function will be to target and investigate police misconduct and corruption. It is anticipated that its policies will be implemented after the new JCF commissioner is sworn in on January 19.

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Comment  
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18. (C) Somewhat ironically, embattled former JCF Commissioner Forbes may have been yet another "casualty" of 2004's soaring crime rate, and of widespread public dissatisfaction with the JCF's seeming impotence in effectively confronting the problem. In his departing remarks, Forbes publicly invited other senior JCF officers to consider early retirement in order to allow "new blood" to circulate within the JCF leadership. We shall see how many others follow - or are compelled to follow - Forbes's lead in retiring.

19. (C) There is every reason to believe that crime in Jamaica will remain a significant public concern during 2005. Some commentators note a lasting solution to the problem rests not only with law enforcement, but with the public. Effective policing requires a level of trust in the JCF that does not currently exist and that citizens cease tolerating the many types of illicit activities that often occur openly without comment or action. It can be a vicious cycle, however, the general lack of trust in the JCF is often a direct result of corruption in the force, heavy handed or incompetent policing, fear of reprisals, and the JCF's unresponsiveness to emergency calls. Forbes's departure offers the possibility of an improvement in JCF performance, but the new commissioner may well have a short honeymoon. It remains to be seen whether he and other senior officers will succeed in making the JCF more effective in its assigned role. End

Comment.  
COBB